

BLU
Serving the Breed and the Breeder

September 2008

Hello BLU Members,

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- **BLU – THE WEB SITE – bflsheep.com**

There are a few updates to the BLU web site.

1. The monthly e-letter will be posted there from now on under “News”.
2. LeeAnn Richert sent the photo of a really beautiful BFL ewe lamb. It's posted on the “Forms” page. Take a look! <http://www.bflsheep.com/images/forms.htm>

Please take the time to check out your listing on the web site, let me know of any changes or corrections.

- **MEET NANCY GILKESON, OREGON**

I met Nancy at the Black Sheep Gathering, Eugene, OR in June. Her booth was a colorful array of her felted items, featuring her kits and instructions on “how to do it yourself”; plus her son-in-law's beautiful tumbled stone buttons and jewelry. I came home with a few kits and have scoured the thrift shops for more suitable fiber. Judy Colvin has incorporated the techniques in her felted items, too.

“Our sheep "business" is primarily my affair...my husband has been a paraplegic since 1964, has not worked with the sheep. I retired early 8 years ago from nursing. I am no business person, strictly a hands-on doer person and without projected goals and plans for BFL's except that I love their nature and fleece type...much finer than I am use to.

Our sheep "operation" started because I needed to grow fiber to spin way back in the 1970's but it was my father-in-law's meat sheep farm where I added a few Romney ewes to do that and when he passed away in 1984, I inherited his sheep (and his jeep!) and knew I was dear to him.

Over the years I kept Romney rams with the heinz 57 survivalist ewes he had had and eventually attained breeding ewes who were probably 90%plus Romney, giving fleeces I liked to spin. I branched out to Corriedale ram for 3 years and saved replacement lambs and several years ago decided to go to the Border Leicester sire as I liked the lighter bone (weight), size and open faces and legs over what I have had for years. At 63 yrs, I need sheep that do not fight me throughout the working situations...both the BLs and BFLs have been much easier for me to handle than the larger Romney girls.

My first BFL interest came just 1 1/3 years ago when I met Judy Colvin and made an unplanned purchase of her Lizzie and then found a ram lamb from Debbie Heinz I could purchase. Have since some late lambs 1/2 BFL-BL X produced this year as well as the twin BFL ewe lambs (Pride and Joy) from Lizzie and purchased another two brood ewes from Judy this year at BSG. Fiddy, my BFL (Yearling Ram now) will service more ewes this year. I have sold off most of my Romney-Corriedale types and kept the BL X ewes (down to 36), with 28 later lambs still here due to slow growth...plan to sell in another month or two. It has been a difficult year for us re: feed.

Re: the wool products, I learned to spin in 1972 from a New Zealander who visited our area for 6 months and was hooked. Just did fiber work for self and for gifts until around 2000 I think when I sold items in spinning/weaving guild booths. Two years ago, I participated with another lady who raised fiber animals at BSG in a booth and this year our son-in-law was able to add his great rock buttons and necklaces to the booth. We joined the Oregon Wool Growers Assoc. in 2005 and have our farm webpage on this collective farm site.



Felting has become my latest creative outlet and BFL fiber seems to work into that niche well, altho I have only done a few wearables with the fiber...it felted nicely and is soft on the skin. I love fabric color and the interplay of that with felting...thus the nuno or laminated felt products are now my favorite thing to do! Have reclaimed hundreds of dresses, skirts etc and washed, torn apart, ironed, measured, and labeled most for resale to other fiberartists for nuno felting as well. Love promoting that process due to texture, color produced with nuno felting.

I should add that Brooke, our first granddaughter and her mom, Christie (our daughter) love to work with the sheep and help as able with shearing, worming, separating into groups etc. which is a blessing!

Take care.
Nancy

- [ASI WEEKLY \(American Sheep Industry\)](#)

(BLU advertises in the ASI Weekly, another area of promoting the Bluefaced Leicester.) This is an excerpt from the September 5, 2008 issue:

Genetic Underpinnings of Sheep Traits May Yield Clues to Greater Productivity

Keeping America's sheep healthy and productive while expanding the market for wool and lamb is the goal of Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists who are matching the animals' physical traits to the genes that underpin their expression.

The scientists are pursuing this research mainly at three ARS locations: the Animal Diseases Research Unit (ADRU) in Pullman, Wash.; the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois, Idaho; and the Roman L. Hruska U.S. Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Neb.

At Dubois, the team led by Gregory Lewis is investigating reproductive efficiency, mineral retention and other traits. Michelle Mousel, an ARS geneticist at Dubois, has also created a bank of frozen tissue specimens from the station's on-site flock of 6,000 lambs, ewes and rams in support of that work, as well as data analysis and genotyping efforts.

At Pullman, ARS scientists Lynn Herrmann-Hoesing, Stephen White and Donald Knowles, who leads ADRU, are using the tissue samples to study whether ovine progressive pneumonia virus levels are affected by specific sheep immune response genes. Their goal is a molecular test with which to measure the levels of such infectious agents in sheep.

Scrapie, a degenerative neurological disease of sheep, is another concern. At Clay Center, ARS microbiologist Michael Heaton and colleagues used DNA analysis and genotyping procedures to identify sheep with 21 prion gene alleles (alternate forms of a gene) that influence genetic resistance to scrapie. The advance has given rise to faster, better and cheaper methods of detecting scrapie susceptibility in sheep and eliminating their predisposition to the disease through selective breeding.

Parallel studies under way at Clay Center and Dubois focus on the so-called myostatin mutation in Texel sheep. Through conventional breeding, researchers eventually may be able to harness the mutation to increase the size of lamb chops without adversely affecting tenderness.

Reprinted from The Prairie Star, Mont.

- **BLU – THE REGISTRY**

***** New banking regulations have been enacted and the banks making a crack down on checks deposited that are NOT made out to the registered business name of the account. So, please, make your checks out to “BLU” when doing registry business.**

1. **Make out your checks or money orders to “BLU”.**
2. **Send your registrations to ASR in Milo, Iowa at the address on the form.**

***** ALL 2008 LAMBS MUST BE REGISTERED BY DECEMBER TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE REGULAR RATE; AFTER THAT TIME IT WILL BE DOUBLE.**

It is so important to keep our purebred Bluefaced Leicesters registered and accounted for. If you have sold stock to new breeders, please follow up and double check to be sure they are registered.

- **AND, TOO.....**

If any of you will be at Rhinebeck, please stop by the BLU booth and make your self known. I will have Kris Barndt’s note pads and cards for sale. Also, the BLU t-shirt will be available in all sizes for a show special price of \$10!

In leicesters, blue is finer!

Kelly

Photos are still needed for the bflsheep.com web site!